

Federal Government Shutdown: Frequently Asked Questions
Office of Congressman Peter Welch

Will I still receive my Social Security or SSI benefits?

Yes. Social Security beneficiaries will continue to receive checks. New applications for benefits may be delayed.

What about unemployment, TANF, or food stamp benefits?

Benefits for eligible participants in these programs will continue to be paid.

How will Medicare and Medicaid services be affected?

Medicare and Medicaid claims will continue to be processed. Processing of new applications for benefits may be delayed. In the event of an extended shutdown, physician payments may be delayed.

Will veterans continue to receive VA benefits and services?

All VA hospitals and clinics will remain open and continue to provide medical services. Veterans compensation, pension, education and other benefits will not be affected. If there is an extended shutdown, the processing of new applications for benefits and disability claims may be delayed and the activities of the Board of Veterans Appeals may be halted.

Will active duty military personnel be furloughed? Will they be paid?

According to the Pentagon, military personnel on active duty, including reserve component personnel on federal active duty, will continue to report for duty. There would be no gap in their pay unless the shutdown lasts beyond February 1. If that happens, they would continue on the job without getting paid until the shutdown ended or until Congress and the president agreed to pay their salaries before it ended. The last time the government shut down, in 2013, the military remained on the job and Congress passed legislation to pay service members during the shutdown. Congressman Welch supports legislation to pay members of the military during this shutdown.

What about the Vermont National Guard?

Many Guard employees will likely be furloughed as day-to-day operations of the Vermont National Guard cease and only essential personnel report to work. Contact the Vermont National Guard for specific information.

How will federal employees and retirees in Vermont be affected? Will furloughed employees be paid?

Many federal employees in Vermont will be furloughed without pay. Decisions on who is furloughed will be made at the agency level. Health insurance coverage will continue, and federal retirees will continue to receive checks. In prior government shutdowns, federal employees received back pay for lost wages. Congress must pass a law to ensure this happens. Congressman Welch supports back pay for federal employees and has cosponsored legislation to make sure that happens.

Will post offices be open? Will mail be delivered?

Yes and Yes.

How will pending applications for immigration benefits be affected?

USCIS offices will remain open. The following programs will expire or suspend operations: EB-5 Immigrant Investor Regional Center Program; E-Verify; Conrad 30 J-1 Doctors; Non-minister religious workers.

How will the shutdown impact my travel plans?

Air traffic controllers, TSA agents, and customs agents will continue to work. Amtrak service will not be affected. The processing of passport applications may be delayed and passport offices located in federal buildings will be closed.

Will the processing of my tax return and refund be delayed?

Possibly. All IRS customer service offices and phone lines will be closed.

How will student financial aid be affected?

While most employees at the U.S. Department of Education will be furloughed, financial aid support staff will remain on the job.

Will I still be able to visit national parks and monuments?

Many open-air national parks will remain open, but will not be staffed. Parks that require staffing, however, will be closed.

Additional federal government services that will be suspended during shutdown include:

- Loans to rural communities;
- New applications for small business loans from the Small Business Administration (SBA);
- Permits and reviews for energy and transportation projects (except in emergency cases);
- Consumer protection services; and
- New patients may not enroll in National Institutes of Health (NIH) clinical trials

If you have questions not answered here, please call the Office of Congressman Peter Welch at 802-652-2450 or toll free at 888-605-7270.